

**Governor's Rural Affairs Council
Meeting Minutes May 19, 2016**

**Thelma Kellar Convention Center, Effingham, Illinois
Illinois Department of Agriculture Building, Illinois State Fair Grounds, Springfield, Illinois**

1. The meeting was called to order by Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti at 2:02pm from her location in Effingham, Illinois.

2. Roll Call

Member Agencies Present:

Illinois Department of Aging, Burt Weber
Illinois Department of Agriculture, Rebecca Clark
Illinois Department Employment Security, Shelly Tweedy and Jeff Fulgenzi
Illinois Department of Human Services, John Marcello (sitting in for Francisco Alvarado)
Illinois Department Public Health, Don Jones
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Amy Walkenback
Illinois Housing Development Authority, Bill Pluta
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, Chris Merrett
Illinois Finance Authority, Patrick Evans
Illinois State Board of Education, Craig Lindvahl
Illinois Department of Transportation, Rich Bauer
Illinois Agricultural Association (Farm Bureau), Brenda Matherly
Rural Partners, Blanche Shoup

Not attending: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Community College Board; University of Illinois Extension, Southern Illinois University.

Citizen Members Present:

Todd Kaeb
Heather Hampton Knodle
Doug Hanks
Sonja Reece
Larry Richards

Citizen Members Not Present:

Luke Allen

Nonvoting Members Present:

Norman Walzer, NIU

Nonvoting Members Not Present:

Colleen Callahan, USDA—Rural Development

Lt. Governor's Office Present:

Evelyn Sanguinetti, Kaitlin Wilhite, Susan Wynn Bence, Brian Costin, Ennedy Rivera

Quorum determined at 18.

3. **Motion to amend the agenda, to move the approval of Working Group Meeting Minutes to immediately follow the Approval of Meeting Minutes of the March 10, 2016, Governor's Rural Affairs Council meeting. A motion to approve was made by Sonja Reese and seconded by Don Jones / Motion Carried.**

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti welcomed the council members and guests. She reported that she had the opportunity to honor council member Craig Lindvahl, presenting him with the *Outstanding Leadership in Community and Education Award*, along with the Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship, recognized for their measurable success in community and economic development; specifically for their creation, development, and implementation of the C.E.O. program. As a result of the C.E.O. class in Effingham, Lindvahl was named Illinois Teacher Premier of the year.

4. **Approval of Working Group Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve Minutes moved by Sonja Reese and seconded by Larry Richards. Motion passed to amend and approve.**
5. **Approval of Meeting Minutes of the March 10, 2016, Governor's Rural Affairs Council meeting. Motion to approve made by Sonya Reese and seconded by Doug Hanks / Motion Carried.**
6. **Motion to approve Working Group Meeting Minutes for all meetings held since the last full committee meeting. Proposed amendments include:** Heather Hampton Knodle/Economic Development was present; a representative from SIU would be invited to participate in the Workforce Group. **Motion to approve minutes and amendments made by Sonya Reese and seconded by Larry Richards / Motion Carried.**
7. **Working Group Summary Update:** 4 main focus areas for next 12 months, including:

Economic Development – support for small businesses, entrepreneurs, and agri-businesses. *Co-Chairs: Todd Kaeb, Heather Hampton Knodle.*

Kaeb Reported: We began doing data collection of best practices done in other states. Kaeb suggested that a document by Norm Walzer was useful to their research. He said there are two approaches:

Item 1) Top down support method: Create a system for small business owners to access with questions that will be processed and answered from a state-sponsored response team.

Item 2) Develop a ground-level program that encourages business owners to expand businesses. They also discussed programs already in place, including *Seniors Work*, which emphasizes mentorship from older people. A North Carolina program pairs retirees with new business owners and uses the 4 pillar approach: Youth Engagement, Entrepreneurship, Rural Family Success, Building Community Wealth; Kansas implemented a program of hiring out-of-state employees and using the income tax they would typically pay, to instead pay off their student loans; He suggested using social media to create an app such as *Entrepreneurial Chat* and possibly a *Linked-In for Illinois* app.

Workforce Development includes identification of emerging workforce needs in rural communities and the development of targeted training programs designed to meet those needs. *Co-Chairs: Norm Walzer and Doug Hanks.*

Walzer reported: We reached out to healthcare personnel for advice and to the DCEO workforce unit.

Item 1) He suggested coordination of a statewide rural initiative to develop robotics manufacturing / technology related businesses. He also suggested development of an awards recognition program to work with those already existing. Blanche Shoup determined that robotics competitions are completed for this year: Tremont School District won the international competition. He suggested that the Lt. Governor send a congratulatory letter and possibly request the presence of a representative to attend the upcoming GRAC meeting. Blanche will gather the upcoming competition dates for the meeting in July.

Item 2) He expressed concern for the number of retirements leaving deficits in the rural workforce populations in healthcare, mechanics, truck drivers, and suggested a project creating incentives for people to seek their training in rural areas; there is a need to examine the accessibility of training in those communities. He also suggested that adjunct professors and other qualified people could teach evening courses at community colleges to address the training accessibility needs.

Item 3) IDES would like to focus more on rural employment than unemployment aspects. He suggested that GRAC could create member agencies to spread the word to promote the services of IDES in rural areas.

Item 4) the co-chairs examined how to increase work opportunity tax credit programs to 22 pre-selected counties. Employers can get tax benefits from participating, but the program is not being used. Member agencies could also promote worker opportunity tax credits to rural employers, and possibly find employment for hard-to-place individuals.

Item 5) Work with workforce boards to determine the unique status and needs of rural manufacturing and agri businesses. Look for best practices in other states, and particularly delivery mechanisms. States doing well have developed a centralized system/one agency with divisions. We might be able to facilitate a conversation among Illinois Departments working on workforce issues by developing a task force to coordinate best practices issues in Illinois. Strategies offered by SIU Medicine and DCEO should be explored to determine how the Workforce Working Group could play a role.

Questions Posed: Sonya Reese asked if there had been any consideration of job sharing. She suggested those in healthcare approaching retirement age may want to work part time rather than retiring altogether. Many do not need healthcare benefits due to Medicare eligibility status. Walzer replied that it will be considered in the upcoming meetings.

Heather Hampton Knodle asked if computer coding, or trying to build in other industry resources through extension was considered regarding the topic of robotics. Response: It has not yet been explored but probably should be.

Bruce Weber: He referred to Title V retraining program for elderly who need to develop skills. Response: Community colleges and extension could get involved. By 2025 we will be faced with a large growth area for employment of those 65 and older.

Shelly Tweedy: She reported that Title 1B program can provide retraining to job seekers/there are no age requirements. She suggested that Title 1B partners should be sought for the retraining programs.
Blanche Shoup: She confirmed that the Title 1B program are available throughout Illinois.

Doug Hanks: He suggested that the Lt. Governor's website might serve as a portal to organize the available programs.

John Marcello of the Illinois Department of Human Services: Regarding Rehabilitation/Relocation division – stated that they have participated in integrated services team to determine where there are similarities in services.

Health – Co-chairs: Reece and Larry Richards.

Item 1) how do we address the need for primary care in rural communities? They are looking at how to utilize technology and telepharmacy; SIU is adding to the initiative with their plans to operate 10-15 clinics with nurses and licensed practical nurses; physicians would interact with patient via video connections. *Advocate* (based in Chicago) does not have the same focus as rural communities, but is working to make specialists available through technology.

Item 2) There is concern for feeding children during the summer and year around. They worked in Livingston County to bring someone with experience from McLean County to demonstrate the process; they have experience with operating 11 feeding sites. The approach is to connect those already doing it with those seeking to do it.

Item 3) To address the issue of emergency vehicles in rural communities, they are looking at partnering with other communities who are replacing a vehicle, to sell the current vehicle to communities with none.

Item 4) It was noted that EMS is not viewed as an essential service by the state, resulting in service fragmentation throughout the state. This may need to be addressed through legislation.

Questions Posed: Heather Hampton Knodle stated that telepharmacy services in their area is spotty due to fiber optics deficits. She observed that EMS services are funded through property tax levies, and freeze proposals have crippled the ability in rural areas to fund those services.

Education – Co-chairs: Lucas Allen and Chris Merrett.

Item 1) What can be done, considering that some of the issues are beyond control or influence, and particularly the lack of funding for rural schools, as well as issues of infrastructure and broadband? Innovative and creative curriculum is one possibility; Integrating CEO program could be integrated, which will give some of the smaller schools a competitive edge against some larger schools. There appears to be an under-emphasis on agriculture within the CEO program, and this would be a good pairing for rural schools with strong Ag programs. Ag education high school seniors would have experience with either working for another business or shadowing a business, to prepare to start their own rural and value-added business; this creates an overlap that would provide an opportunity for pairing the CEO program with Ag programs.

We would like to facilitate a conversation between the CEO program and the Ag experts in the state to further this potential partnership. Luke Allen is positioned to facilitate due to his affiliation with FCAE and could serve a key role in influencing Ag educators. This also offers collaboration opportunities to the Workforce Development working group and the Economic Development working group also.

Item 2) A smaller project would involve calculating the economic impacts of the supervised agricultural experience (SAE) projects that are being completed by High School Ag students. FCAE (Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education) estimates that the economic value is between \$10-11 million for those projects statewide. We would like to do a small economic impact study to identify the ripple effect experienced within the community and determine what sort of economic impact it could have if it was expanded.

Item 3) Three years the IIRA did a survey of high school juniors and seniors involving 6 or 7 school districts. Approximately 180-200 students responded. Those preparing to graduate and contemplating a move away from their community were asked questions such as “What was good about your school?”; “Which courses would you have liked that were not available?”; “What would compel you to return to your community?” Responses included “More A.P. and foreign language courses would have been good.”; and “Job opportunities would be key to returning.” This highlighted the need to emphasize entrepreneurship as an alternative, if a factory or white collar job was not an option. Teaching entrepreneurship in the schools seemed important. We also wanted to learn what the school principals and superintendents were thinking, to determine if there was overlap and agreement between students and administration regarding the future direction of school districts.

We have considered reaching out to the Illinois Association of Small and Rural Schools. It is presently headquartered at SIU Carbondale and the president is Mark Toomey, the superintendent in Macomb. Perhaps we could collaborate to get a sense of Workforce Development needs from the superintendent and principal’s perspective, to determine how that information would mesh with the previous survey results. There should have been more of an understanding also on what extension does because they were a part of our group, as well as the Community College Board. We would like to explore further how we can address some of their interests as well.

Comments and Questions Posed: Craig Lindvahl responded that CEO is structured to reflect each of the communities that it is in. He provided the example of his teaching in Effingham and visiting hog confinements, grain farms, and plants such as F.S. and end-users such as grocery stores, which gave students an understanding of the chain. When in a rural community such as Effingham, it is a part of what they do. Effingham County started a construction trade class based on the CEO model, which just finished the first year. There has been recent discussion of doing an Ag-based program as well.

Heather Hampton Knodle added that she chairs the Montgomery County CEO program. There are 4 school districts within that county. Each had an initial discussion, noting that they are bound to the guidance counselor, master schedules, and any other state requirements that must be met for seniors. It seemed to be perceived as more of a threat than an opportunity, and the overlying issue is a case by case basis from school to school and within each county. The conversation with them needs to foster an understanding that the CEO program can become an opportunity for their schools that will strengthen their curriculum.

Todd Kaeb stated that the CEO program is really beneficial because it is changing the message from 25 years ago, when students were told they would need a 4 year degree and would settle in a larger community to make a living wage. This program fosters confidence and an environment that encourages an entrepreneurial spirit. Students leaving for community college or 4 year university need to have the mindset that they plan to return to begin a business, rather than feeling that they must seek employment elsewhere. He provided an example of having patented an item that they were selling online, and he brought the product to an entrepreneurial class and gave them the opportunity to develop a marketing plan, which included selling it on Amazon.com. Some of the proceeds went back to the school, and the confidence boost among the students was visible.

Doug Hanks noted the impact of SAE projects, emphasizing that he began a project in high school (growing a quarter acre of pumpkins) which he has maintained, that now has an economic impact valued at more than \$65k in the past few years. These types of projects should be emphasized, as well as the projects being started in some communities that are similar to *Galesburg Promise* (a non-functioning economic development group with money). *Galesburg Promise* was modeled after the program in Peoria, and offers those who have matriculated solely in Galesburg from K through 12, funding for a 2 year degree after all other scholarship monies have been gathered, on a prorated basis. Establishing this sort of project in communities with non-functioning economic development groups may be an opportunity to link to education. Galesburg also established a 1% hotel/motel tax to help sustain funding over the long term. This has enabled approximately 200 students to access free education on a 2 year level just this year alone. This project resulted from a mayoral summit, when the mayors decided to adopt this model.

Sonja Reese added that sometimes these programs serve as learning tools for urban students, and shared that she had recently attended a reporting session for their entrepreneurship program for high school seniors, that included a student who has secured land to develop a large community garden.

8. CEO Program – Guest speaker *Craig Lindvahl* reported that they have established nearly 40 programs in IL, IN, MN, MO, and CO. Expansion is happening quickly. The concept is as much about community development as it is education. He points out that although students complain that they leave their communities because of lacking opportunities, employers tell him they have jobs but can find no one to fill them. The challenge is in determining how to engage with young people; creating hands-on opportunities that will expose them to real-world experience is the key. CEO is funded by local investors rather than schools, at \$1k per investor annually, which generates “buy-in” from larger communities. When the number of investors totals 40-50, the investors want to see the program succeed, and then witnessing the enthusiasm of the students creates enthusiasm among the investors.

Classes typically start at 7-7:30 a.m. One of the classes held in Robinson, Illinois began meeting at 6:30 a.m. because the students wanted more time to work on their projects. Students visit between 20-50 area businesses and host 50-100 guest speakers, and get to see their communities from a completely different viewpoint. Early in the year the focus is on creating an environment where the students are engaged, and opening them up to this type of experience generates a curiosity. Lindvahl offered an example of touring a facility that manufactures plastic bottles, which gave the students an opportunity to learn about the manufacturing process, and what it is like to work in this type of business. They also learn about responsibility and accountability, and it creates an awareness that the bottles they encounter routinely may have been made in the facility they toured. Multiply that experience by the number of facility tours the course offers, and suddenly the world has become a very interesting place,

according to Lindvahl. They write 2 business plans per year, with one being for a business they run together, and one for their personal business, for a real business, rather than a “pretend” business. They also run a class business, which is typically an event, with the students planning and coordinating the entire experience, and then hosting a trade show at the end of the year, and showcasing their businesses and services. Robinson sold approximately \$12k in business and services last year.

The goal is to create a new perspective for the students of their hometown as being a place of opportunity, rather than a “dead-end.” At the beginning of the school year only 3 students of 25 had expressed an interest in returning to their home town. By the end of the year, the dynamic had shifted to 21 of 25. Lindvahl suggested that it had opened their eyes to what was available to them, suggesting that the potential for each of the communities where CEO is offered is likely the same. He reported that the expansion will include 25-50 classes yearly, and said that interest in the program is nation-wide. During the 5 years of teaching, 6-8 students have gone into ag businesses. One 18 year-old young man began a cover crop business, and said that some of his customers did not realize that he was not in his middle 30s until he went to the site to deliver his product. Another student is presently at U of I and her goal is to spread the word about ag education, the field of agriculture, and how many opportunities exist. When they have exposure to these opportunities through CEO, they develop an awareness about things they had not thought about before.

Questions Posed: John Marcello of the Department of Human Services requested that Lindvahl repeat the states where the CEO programs currently exist (IL, IN, MN, MO, and CO), which prompted Lindvahl to explain that they only go where they are asked to come, rather than trying to sell their program. He added that you need someone in your community who will secure the monetary commitment (a doer) and a convener, which is someone who will bring the business community together to hear about the CEO program and how it works. John Marcello explained that he has had inquiries about the program and said the state of Nebraska is also interested.

Lt. Governor Sanguinetti asked if there is a template of the CEO program that schools could use to replicate it. Lindvahl responded that schools do not initiate the program 99% of the time, because businesses are typically the catalyst. He also explained that it adds nothing to the school’s plate, other than an opportunity. Resources are available at <http://www.midlandinstitute.com/>, including a start-up guide, a brochure, and a process is available to help walk communities through it. He then gave Heather Hampton Knodle’s success as an example of how quickly a community can make this program viable, when you have a motivated “doer.” Lt. Governor Sanguinetti said that she would like to provide the guidelines on her website also.

Shelley Tweedy suggested that typically students volunteer for the program only after learning through the superintendent or principal that it is available, and asked if there is any other method for marketing it. Lindvahl replied that students apply and the characteristics of a good applicant are being trustworthy and having a good work ethic. Although guidance counselors and administrators promote the program, the most effective approach is having business owners recommending students to the program. Within about 3 years, the students will have established an applicant pool through word of mouth, but in the beginning it takes a concerted effort to assure that the right students are made aware. This is a franchised program requiring an investment and an agreement with the Midland Institute, followed up with interaction between CEO programs for best practices, hiring a facilitator, etc. There is a \$25k one-time fee to initiate the program, and funding the on-going work comes from the \$1k local investors.

John Marcello of the Department of Human Services asked if there is anything within the program that provides dual credit courses or that would lead to a post certificate. Lindvahl said it varies by class. All students get 2 high school credits, some get as few as 3 hours of dual credit, some get 12 hours plus a certificate of entrepreneurship, depending on the local community college and their level of interest and whether they have curriculum that can be dovetailed with it, and thus far some 4 year institutions have discussed it, but nothing has been made available through those thus far.

9. Summer Meals Program – Amy Bianco and Bob Dolgan.

Dolgan began by addressing the level of need in Illinois, citing the term “food insecurity,” and explaining that this means there is inadequate access to food; the U.S. Census Bureau identified that 1.75 million people experience food insecurity in Illinois; children account for 643k of that total. The summer food service program helps to address the issue and has been around since 1975, funded by the U.S. Illinois Department of Agriculture, authorized through the Child Nutrition Bill, and administered by the Illinois Board of Education in Springfield. Organizations who take fiscal responsibility for the program include non-profit organizations, units of government, and a residential camp can serve food and receive reimbursement, as well as any 501C3 status organization. These can include faith-based organizations, community centers, boys and girls clubs, a YMCA, or any organization classified as a non-profit that serves children.

During the school year children are participating in the program, but only 14% of those who are eligible take advantage of the program during the summer months, due to a lack of access, causing concern for where the children are receiving meals. Many summer meal sites are not open to the public, so we advocate when we are meeting with potential sites, to see if they can open their doors. Many are run by volunteers just doing it “out of the goodness of their hearts,” with financial constraints. There is definitely a need for more infrastructure and sites are needed to serve more children. A map was produced based on eligibility, showing how many sites are available per county, versus how many are needed. The USDA targeted Illinois as an assistance state in 2014 and 2015 bringing additional resources to the state, helping with capacity building, facilitating, coordination, convening regular meetings with USDA, the State Board of Education, Illinois No Kid Hungry, and the Secretary of Agriculture. Illinois No Kid Hungry was founded in 2012 and provides up to \$80k annually to help fund sites during the summer months. Illinois has increased the number of summer meals served by 19%, although we continue to rank in the middle of all states. Canvassing door to door in urban areas is a possibility to raise awareness, as well as using digital outreach and social media, along with kick-off events, with 11 held last year. Outdoor advertising and public service announcements are also utilized, and providing a phone number and mobile app to assist people in locating sites. We also have a website, <http://il.nokidhungry.org/summer-meals>.

The Lt. Governor has also recently launched a site in Pontiac, which is the first site located in Livingston County, bringing the total to 8 counties who now have sites, thus lowering the number of counties lacking sites. The Lt. Governor also recorded a public service video announcement in both Spanish and English and made it available on the website. The Child Nutrition Reauthorization is a bill authorizing school meal programs nationwide, and we are presently operating under an extension of it, which sets the funding levels for the program and determines what types of foods are available through the summer meals program. Amy Bianco added that this program serves children 18 and under when school is not in session. Eligible sites include anywhere that children congregate and this can be either just a feeding site, or it can also have activities provided at the site. Providing activities generally attracts more children, so we encourage our sites to plan ahead and try to offer some type of activity, such as coloring

or movie days, as well as coordinating with municipal organizations (fire, Illinois Departments, police, honor society students needing more community service hours, etc.) Sponsors can be a school, along with any private, non-profit, or faith-based organizations. Meals must meet federal guidelines. Sponsors track the number of meals served monthly and submit for reimbursement at the end of each month. The reimbursement is meant to cover all of the sponsor's costs, including food and labor.

Debriefing sessions are held at the end of the season to determine best practices and to develop resources for planning for the next year. Information sessions are being held in February to spread the word about the program. Transportation is an issue, and particularly because there is a congregate feeding rule imposed, which prohibits the concept of mobile feeding programs. Funding has been issued to 31 sites under the No Kids Hungry branch. To get the word out, the State Board of Education has done print ads, radio ads, and in the northern part of the state there are ads in the train station, and on the buses, PSAs, and social media. We also make posters, book marks, etc. to get the word out. And we still seek help in finding ways to raise awareness.

Questioned Posed:

Brenda Matherly with the Illinois Farm Bureau asked if the program has worked with any of the Farm Bureaus, suggesting that they would make a good partner. Amy responded that the local Farm Bureaus were included in meetings held in September 2015, and they had planned to provide information on their websites. She added that the USDA is also promoting the *Farm to Summer* program.

10. Annual Report Discussion

Chris Merrett summarized the draft, saying that the Table of Contents provides an outline of the contents in the draft. The report includes an introduction explaining the origin of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council that addresses why there is an Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs, a companion agency of the GRAC. In the body of the report the question "What is rural?" is also addressed. The 2003 definition used by Office of Management and Budget, from the Census Bureau, which characterizes "rural" as the 66 non-metro, or rural counties in Illinois was utilized. Demographic data is also included in the report, along with background information that is aligned with the 4 working groups. This is a working document and Merrett encouraged suggestions to improve the document. Page 13 provides a list of members who have already provided a narrative. Other agencies are encouraged to submit their summaries. Conclusions and priorities for the future will be derived from the observations made by the Lt. Governor and GRAC members.

11. New Business: 2016 GRAC Meeting Dates.

- i. 7/14 Springfield - Illinois Department of Agriculture, State Fair Grounds – 11am.
- ii. 11/15 Springfield - Illinois Department of Agriculture, State Fair Grounds – 11am.

12. Member Updates and Reports: None submitted.

13. Public Comments: None made.

14. Adjournment. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Sonia Reese / Seconded by Larry Richards / Motion Carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted by:

**Chris Merrett, Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Western Illinois University**